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The Design and Applications of a Corporate Image for Strasenburgh Planetarium

Victor Costanzo Jr

THE DESIGN AND APPLICATIONS OF A CORPORATE IMAGE FOR STRASENBURGH PLANETARIUM

by

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is divided into three major phases:

1. The design and formulation of a corporate identification symbol for the proposed Strasenburgh Planetarium to be built here in Rochester;
2. The application of that symbol to a one minute slide presentation in the form of a public service announcement for television;
3. The application of the symbol to a graphically related direct-mail advertising piece.

The main function of a planetarium is to project on a large dome above an audience in a circular theatre, an exact replica of the night-time sky, including all stars visible to the naked eye, the Milky Way, planets, the sun and moon, comets, meteors, artificial satellites, and other assorted celestial phenomena.

The building of a major planetarium installation in the Rochester area reflects a trend that has been spreading over the country in recent years. In this advancing space age, there is increasing public interest in the sky and astronomy in general, especially among the young. With each new manned space flight and the upcoming man-to-the-moon missions, there is a need for the public to learn about space and to become more knowledgeable about the important events that will occur in space and how they will affect them, both as tampayers and as private citizens in the years to come.

The planetarium is the major educational facility for public presentations in the astronomical sciences. The inception here of this facility, therefore, represents a great educational and cultural addition to the community. It is because of this fact that it was considered desirable to design for the planetarium a contemporary corporate symbol to present to the public, and through it to suggest something of the dynamic nature, spirit, and function of this facility.

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES

Several meetings were arranged with Strasenburgh Planetarium Director Ian C. McLennan in the early stages of the thesis project to become familiar with the planetarium building (still in the blueprint stage), its planned facilities and presentations. Correspondence was also sent to sixteen major planetariums in the United States and Canada, requesting printed literature about their particular establishments.

It is evident from the correspondence received that the concept of utilizing a corporate image to graphically symbolize the essence of a planetarium, does not seem to be employed by many such installations at this time. It would seem that the official stance taken by most of these is that such a concept does not apply to a planetarium, or is not considered proper to the nature of such an educational institution of this type. In part, this was also voiced by Mr. McLennan in one interview. It is felt that a corporate image would necessarily introduce the thread of commercialism into the cultural and educational fabric of the planetarium; because of this danger such images are avoided to maintain the conventional image that is believed most proper.

It is the contention of this thesis that the former view is an erroneous assumption on the planetariums' part. A corporate image, after all, need not be strictly commercial in its purposes or applications. As members of a society of

consumers, we may be necessarily conditioned to the viewpoint that the ulterior purpose of a nicely designed and evocative symbol or image must be to impress people, and to cause an emotional stimulation of some kind to prompt them to buy, or believe in, or participate in, the subject at hand; it is this image building and symbol manipulation that advertising agencies use on the public to entice them to buy or join or use a particular commodity. Planetarium administrative staffs wish to keep away from this commercial involvement.

If this conditioning is as extensive as some people believe it to be, then those same administrative staffs could be making a mistake by not using a corporate image of some kind. The planetarium is, after all, trying to sell itself and its services, its presentations and its educational facilities to the community, although not on a commercial, profit-making basis. Indeed, the omission of a corporate identifying image of any kind may even suggest a negative image of a non-vital, non-dynamic institution; this may have a very adverse effect on a public that has become conditioned to react emotionally and sympathetically to images and symbols.

Hence a justifiable need was seen for designing a corporate symbol for Strasenburgh Planetarium. The overriding keynote, however, applied to the entire thesis, was one of dignity. This was stipulated strongly by Mr. McLennan. In keeping with the nature of the planetarium as a dramatic theatre of the stars and a stage for the splendors of the

heavens, any designed image and its subsequent uses must be of a dignified and decorous nature.

An early visit was made to local television studio WROC-TV, to ask about information regarding their presentations of public service announcements. They explained that most such spots, in general, are restricted to ten or twenty seconds and rarely do they extend to one minute. Since most public service announcements originating locally consist of one or two slides that are maintained on the screen while an announcer provides the pertinent information, it is felt by the studio that a one minute version of this type would inevitably cause loss of audience interest. Since it was decided that the television announcement for this thesis would be done with slides, the problem thus presented itself: to sustain audience interest for the entire minute with strong visuals and with a secondary, though well integrated, sound track. Thus the task would be to reverse the present situation: from the greater emphasis on the audio with supporting visuals, to a more pronounced visual presentation with supportive sound track.

An interview was also conducted with Mr. John Stott, Assistant Director of Television Advertising for Eastman Kodak Co. He explained that there are two methods for the production of television commercials that he classifies as such. These are the expository method and the emotional method. In the expository technique, the decision is made as to a definite message that must be spelled out and communicated clearly, it is filmed and edited to that end, and

then the necessary music and narration is added to support the message. In the emotional method, a desired mood and evocative atmosphere or feeling is chosen through particular music and narration, and then the visuals are structured around the sustaining of that mood.

The interesting thing to note is that it is assumed on Mr. Stott's part that an emotional approach cannot be structured through visuals alone, but is primarily established through the proper selection of music.

Preliminary thoughts about the television announcement gravitated around an attempt to create an evocative, and in this case ethereal mood through visuals alone, but it soon became evident that this was possible to a certain extent only; it became apparent that much support towards the final communicative message was contributed by the music and narration to create and sustain the chosen emotional mood.

CHAPTER II

THE CORPORATE IMAGE

The design of the corporate image was the first task to be completed. It was to this end that correspondence was sent to the planetariums across the country, to discover what kind of graphics, if any, they used. See Figs. 1, 2.

The design for Strasenburgh's corporate image revolved around four main concepts. They were:

1. The star projector-dome relationship
2. The building architecture
3. The initials "SP"
4. An astronomical symbol (specifically, the form of a spiral galaxy.)

Each of these concepts was employed in various ways to arrive at a variety of tentative symbols.

The first concept involved the physical apparatus at the heart of every planetarium, the star projector and its projection dome. Hayden Planetarium in New York uses a variation of this idea. See Fig.2. The first design was quite literal and matter of fact, an attempt to simplify the Hayden design. See Fig. 3a. The star projector is not particularly a handsome piece of design in itself, but rather appears cumbersome and grotesque in any position. Therefore design 3b. reduces the projector into its two main spherical elements, the portions that actually project the stars on the dome. They may also suggest the hemispheres of the earth that turns to present each to the sky above.

Further refinements were carried out in design 3c which bring out the dome shape more clearly. The stars are eliminated altogether and the projector abstraction is broken down into a positive-negative treatment which can perhaps suggest the earth (the positive element which is an ochre-green in the original) as one with the heavens and of the universe, in one unified scheme. Lettering was added in this and other designs to suggest its relationship with the design element.

The second concept dealt with the architecture of the building, itself. The structure is patterned on the design of our Milky Way and other spiral galaxies. See Fig. 4a. The central hub contains the star theatre, the arms, displays and offices. One arm stretches out to the street. Attempts to transpose this design literally into an image were not as successful as they should be. See Fig. 4b. More successful than the strictly literal interpretation was a second design, Fig. 4c. The total image was not as cumbersome looking as 4b, but the response that it evoked in connection with the total concept of the planetarium was quite static and lacked that necessary dynamic quality.

The next three designs, Fig. 5a, 5b, 5c, were based on the concept of redesigning the initials SP into a handsome image in itself. It has since been realized that this is not an acceptable solution. The letter forms were, for this purpose, too restricting and too limiting to be utilized effectively to convey a meaningful and successful corporate symbol. The attempt, for example, in Fig. 5c to force the

letter forms to accommodate the introduction of the dome element simply does not work without destroying the integrity of the letter forms themselves.

The fourth concept involved a design based on an astronomical subject. The spiral galaxy was chosen because of its relation to the building design. Fig. 6a was the first attempt in this group, but was more of a pinwheel design than a spiral galaxy. Subsequent designs were patterned on the standard two-arm spiral, with an attempt to suggest the initial S into the design, but with the intent to be seen only after the initial impression of the spiral had been seen.

It is from this group that the final image emerged. The basic spiral design, Fig. 6e, was switched from the positive to the negative treatment, to suggest a brilliant white galaxy suspended in deep space. See Fig. 6f. This finally evolved into a linear treatment of the same design. See Fig. 6g. (These were all rendered as positive images, but were later used in their negative aspect to keep the flavor of design 6f.) The linear character, it was felt, suggested more than the others the dynamic movement sought after in the entire series.

Experimentation with the thickness of the line was carried out; the result of this was the final image used. It employed a thinner central line, to compensate for the closer space in that area, and it gradually thickened as it spiraled out into the arms. See Fig. 6g. Hence, many different concepts are incorporated and suggested in the

final design: the feeling and image of a spiral galaxy, the structure of the planetarium building itself, the suggestion of the rotating, swirling heavens (somewhat similar in concept to the ancient symbolic meaning of the swastika), and finally the intimation of the initial S.

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OLDEN GATE PARK SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA 94118

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM
THE ALEXANDER F. MORRISON PLANETARIUM
THE STEINHART AQUARIUM

April 7, 1967

Mr. Victor Costanzo, Jr.

Dear Mr. Costanzo:

In regard to your letter of March 28th, here is the material you requested.

FIG. 1. A sample of four letterheads from various planetariums in the country.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM—HAYDEN PLANETARIUM
81st STREET AT CENTRAL PARK WEST
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10024
7 March 1967

ANTOINETTE FAUCHER
Administrative Assistant

DOW PLANETARIUM
City of Montréal, Canada

THE MOREHEAD PLANETARIUM
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHAPEL HILL

THE FELS PLANETARIUM
OF THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
20th STREET at the PARKWAY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNA. 19103

THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

FIG. 2. Some examples of the limited graphics used by a few planetariums: top, the star-projector and dome relationship; middle, use of the building architecture; bottom, a further abstraction of the architecture concept.

FIG. 3a. A literal interpretation of the projector-dome relationship. Below, further refinements of this idea.

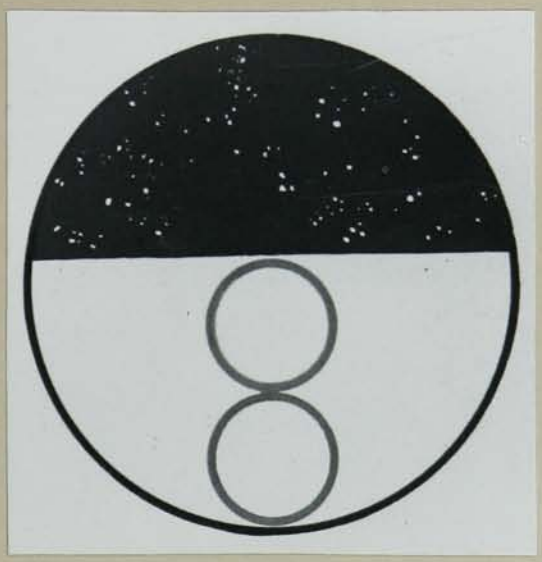


FIG. 3b.

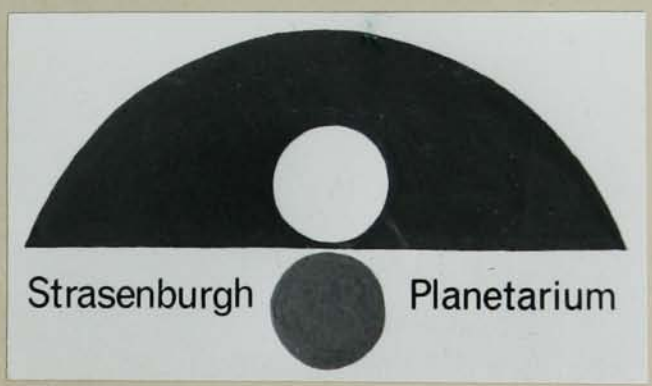
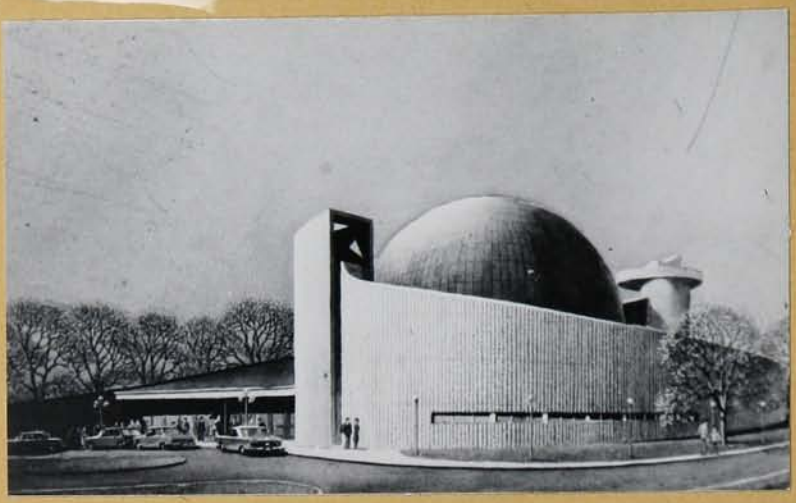


FIG. 3c.



FIGS. 4a. The proposed planetarium as shown in architect's rendering, top, and small scale model.

BELOW: Designs based on the building architecture.

FIG. 4b.

FIG. 4c.

FIG. 5a.

FIG. 5b.

FIG. 5c.

FIGS. 5. Attempts to employ the initials "SP" as a corporate image in themselves.

FIG. 6a.

FIG. 6b.

FIG. 6c.

FIG. 6d.

FIGS. 6. The series of designs based on the model of a spiral galaxy, the model used in the design of the planetarium.

FIGS. 6.(cont'd) A positive-negative treatment of the ultimately selected shape.

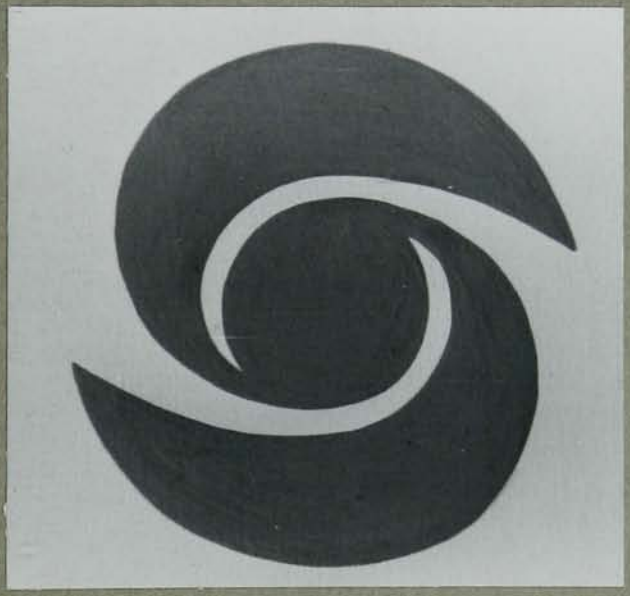


FIG. 6e.

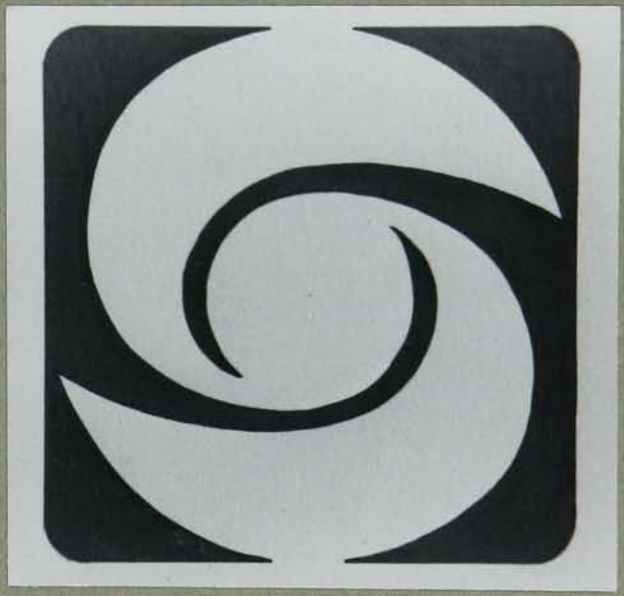


FIG. 6f.

FIG. 6g.(cont'd) Linear development of design 6f and variation of line thickness. Bottom version is chosen image.

CHAPTER III

TELEVISION PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

This aspect of the project demanded, by far, the most time and effort in its preparation. A one minute presentation seemed deceptively short at first, but it was soon realized that the short time limitation was a very crucial factor that governed all else. The emotional method was favored over an expository treatment of the subject, both in view of the fact that the planetarium does not yet physically exist and also because the subject matter lends itself to an emotional development more effectively than a direct expository technique.

In speaking with many people, it was discovered that a large percentage of them had no idea that Strasenburgh Planetarium was being built here at all. A Rochester Museum official related that when he asked his secretary about the proposed planetarium, she thought it was a place where plants are grown. Since this public service announcement was to be shown over television, and the audience would include a variety of people, it was assumed that many of them would not know of the planetarium's inception or its purpose.

Consequently, the main concept behind the presentation was envisioned as twofold:

1. To inform the public of the planetarium's existence;
2. To show that it deals with the astronomical realm.

The television announcement would also serve, of course, as a vehicle to introduce the corporate identification symbol to the public.

Slides were taken of general astronomical subjects during the initial phases of the thesis. Since many of the subjects involved were possible to photograph only through the world's largest telescopes, many slides were copied from half-tone reproductions in books and magazines. Other slides were obtained from the planetarium office; scenes of the astronauts in orbit were purchased from NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) in Houston, Texas. During this time, an initial storyboard was begun, to show generally some of the visuals to be included and their tentative sequence. Those finally maintained and their terminal positions are shown in Fig. 7a.

During research at the public library, it was discovered that the nineteenth century American poet, Walt Whitman, was called the "Poet of the Cosmos". The scientific aspects of astronomy did not engage him especially; his science was that of human emotions. He was rapt and thrilled when he looked up and wrote of the night-time sky. Similarly, this is the impression and the emotional response that is instilled in the spectator viewing a planetarium presentation. They are quite demonstrative, stirring, and exciting visual demonstrations. Therefore, the choice of Whitman's poetry seemed very appropriate for the purpose at hand. A search of his work yielded many lines on the subject. But six were eventually found which seemed quite proper to the visuals that

had been considered up to that time. Taken from two poems, Song of Myself, and A Song of Joys, the lines are:

> This day before dawn I ascended a hill and
> look'd at the crowded heaven,
> And I said to my spirit, "When we become the
> enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure
> and knowledge of everything in them, shall
> we be fill'd and satisfied then?"
> And my spirit said, "No, we but level that lift
> to pass and continue beyond."
>
> O to realize space!
> The plenteousness of all, that there are no
> bounds,
> To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and
> moon and flying clouds, as one with them.

Several musical selections from the audio-visual section of the public library were monitored, but all were of poor quality from the repeated usage. Finally, a new record was purchased, containing a selection of varied musical pieces of different moods for use specifically with films or slides. The two selections chosen, one of "Music of the Spheres", and the other of mysterious time and space music, had to be spliced together in parts to achieve the necessary sixty seconds of audio.

The services of a student announcer were secured to read the lines of poetry. The two tapes, voice and music, were mixed and combined onto a single tape.

Concurrent with the formation of the sound track, the visuals were re-structured slightly to better conform to the words of Whitman; more slides were taken with this purpose in mind. Rarely was a slide found suitable for use just as it came back from the processor; many hours were spent in trial sandwiching of slides, trying to find a more

pleasing and effective composition, or a stronger and more enhanced organization of the various visual elements. This was especially necessary when dealing with those slides taken from half-tone reproductions. Invariably, when the slides were projected, the subject matter looked very flat, and betrayed the fact that it was copied from a photograph. The problem was to overcome this artificiality and two dimensionality. Sandwiching usually remedied the situation. Sometimes superimposing two identical slides, one slightly overexposed, made a great difference in the apparent depth and space in the image. Thus, the copied look was reduced considerably.

Other slides besides these were taken, however. Some were taken of sunsets, cloud formations, abstract patterns in rocks, snow drifts, etc., all with the thought of superimposing these abstract images over a predetermined representational subject. This procedure usually yielded a more ethereal and mysterious mood than could be achieved with the straight slides alone.

In all, some two hundred slides were taken; when these were assorted and prepared into useable slides, perhaps sixty were made available to choose from for the final presentation. Of these, sixteen were finally chosen.

The final format was one of lap-dissolving from one image into the next. The average time for each slide on the screen was four seconds; this helped create a photo-montage effect that culminated in the introduction of the corporate image at the very end. See Fig. 7b.

MUSIC: STARTS DURING BLACK SCREEN; FIRST SLIDE COMES ON 2 OR 3 SECONDS LATER

ANNCR:

THIS DAY BEFORE DAWN...

FIG. 7a.

ANNCR:

WHEN WE BECOME THE ENFOLDERS OF THOSE ORBS...

SAME. . .

ANNCR:

...AND THE PLEASURE AND KNOWLEDGE . . .

ANNCR:

... OF EVERYTHING IN THEM . . . ——

TO

"SATISFIED THEN"

ANNCR:

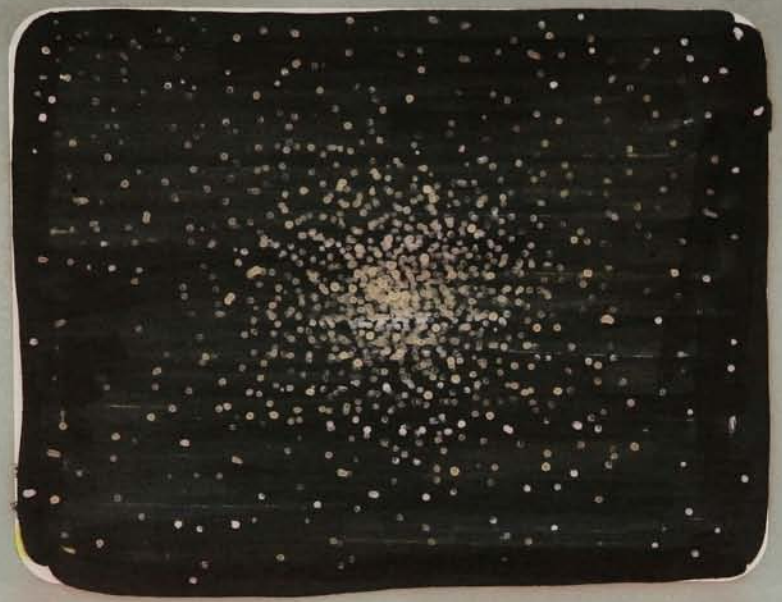
AND MY SPIRIT SAID . . .

ANNCR:

TO PASS AND CONTINUE BEYOND.

ANNCR:

O! TO REALIZE SPACE..



ANNCR:

THE PLENTEOUSNESS. OF ALL...

ANNCR:

TO EMERGE AND BE OF THE SKY...

ANNCR:

OF THE SUN & MOON...

ANNCR:

AS ONE WITH THEM.

Slide

This day before dawn I ascended a hill
  and look'd at the crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit, "When we become
  the enfolders of those orbs and the pleasure
  and knowledge of everything in them,
  shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?"

And my spirit said, "No, we but level that lift
  to pass and continue beyond."
O to realize space!
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,
To emerge and be of the sky,
  of the sun and moon and flying clouds,
  as one with them.

(From Song of Myself, and
A Song of Joys,
by Walt Whitman)

1

2

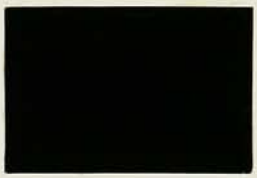
3

4

5

6

7



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CHAPTER IV

THE DIRECT-MAIL ADVERTISING PIECE

This portion of the thesis was not begun until the television announcement was in comparatively final form. It was the original intention to use several of the graphic images from the television presentation in the advertising piece to help relate the two. The main intent of the self-mailer would be to introduce and display the corporate symbol and its derivation.

In the construction of initial roughs (Figs. 8, 9, 10) several methods were tried to demonstrate the derivation of the corporate symbol. One such method considered was to print the symbol on clear acetate to allow the image of a spiral galaxy to show through from beneath. See Fig. 8a, 8c. Another method tested used a die-cut of the central portion of the symbol. This approach, shown in Fig. 9, could cause problems, however, if the mailer were to come into contact with other loose mail. The resulting edges of the die-cut could act as a catch-all for other pieces of mail.

It was eventually decided that the most effective way was to simply present the corporate image on the front page and, on the page beneath, position the image of the galaxy in the same place. Upon opening the piece, the eye would act as the connective link in correlating the two images. The color of both would also be the same to help establish this relationship. See Figs. 10a. and 11a.

Several types of formats were considered and constructed, but the one finally chosen was a six page, two-fold, self-mailer. The format was laid out in a horizontal rather than the usual vertical style commonly used in this type. This was employed to give the piece greater length in its folded-out position; this was done to create the impression of an unfolding vista, or to suggest, perhaps, the panorama of the heavens and man's growing involvement and developing experiences in space.

The graphic elements chosen included a scene of the rendezvous of two Gemini spacecraft in orbit above the earth, and a star chart of the heavens, as it might appear in the star theatre on the dome of the planetarium. See Fig. 11.

Previously, the rough of this chosen piece was presented to post office officials to ask if it conformed to postal regulations. In bulk mailings, as this would be, the only stipulation given in the case of folded mailers similar to this one, was that each piece lie flat and not cause other pieces of mail to become wedged within its folds. If each piece did so, that is, lie flat, then no staples or gummed seals would be necessary to keep them closed. In addition, a minimum size of three inches by four and one quarter inches was required on the side carrying the address. No other problems were found with the piece as far as feasibility of mailing was concerned.

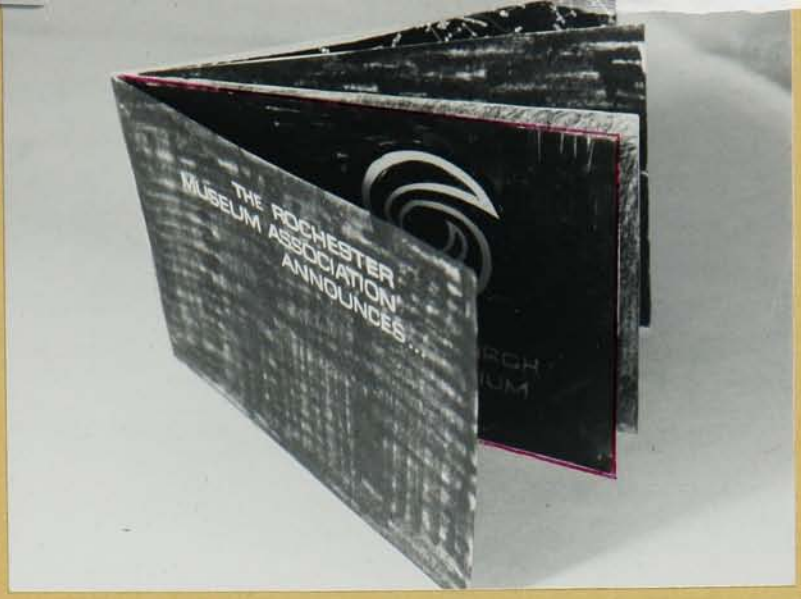
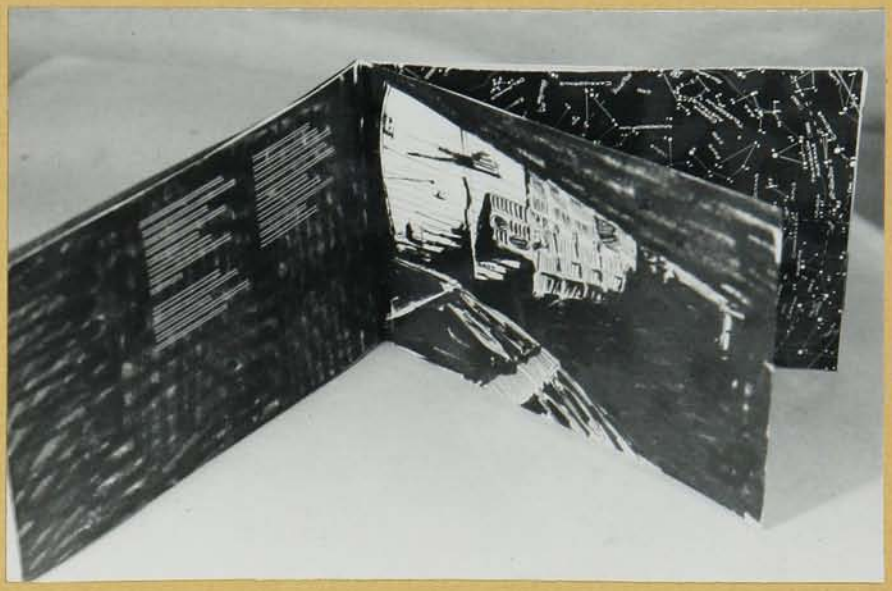


FIG. 8a.

FIG. 8b.



FIGS. 8. The first of a series of roughs constructed for the direct-mail piece. Red outlines in Fig. a,c, indicate acetate page.

FIG. 8c.

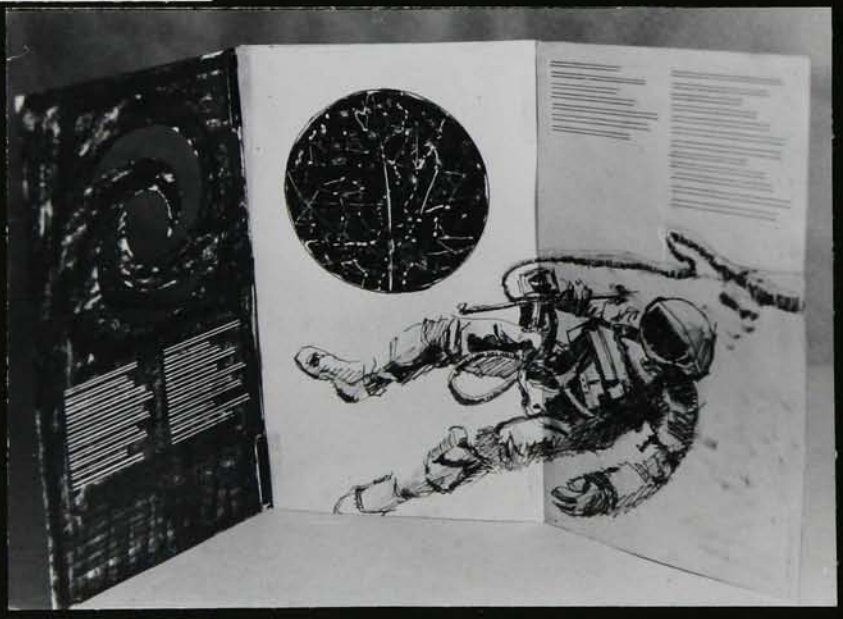


FIG. 9. Another rough; the center of the symbol is die-cut to illustrate derivation of the symbol from the image of a spiral galaxy, which shows through from beneath.

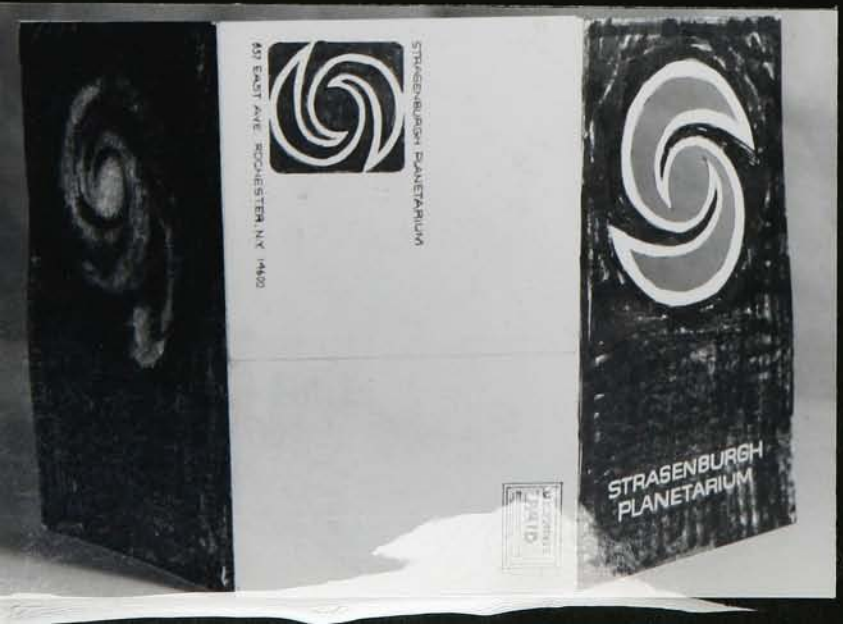


FIG. 10a.

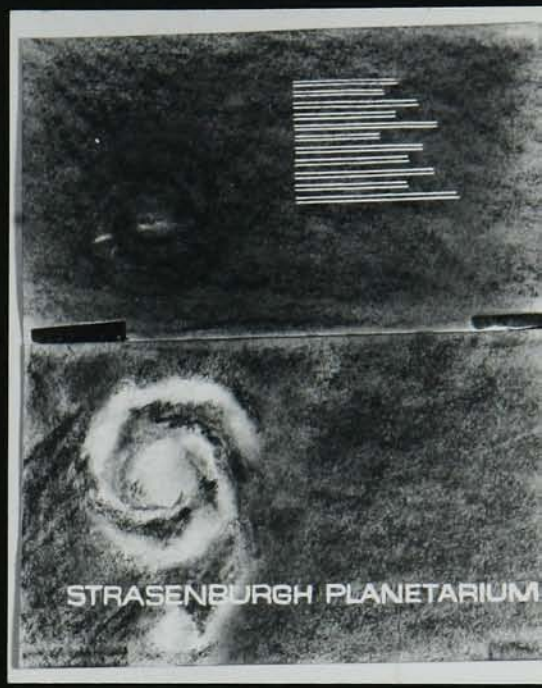


FIG. 10b.

FIG. 10c.

FIGS. 10. A third rough, another concept to show derivation of the symbol; placement on page is same as spiral galaxy beneath. Eye correlates the two. FIGS 10b, c show unfolding from 10a position.

FIG. 11a. The final comprehensive of the direct-mail advertising piece. On front page, corporate symbol is magenta, typography is white on black ground.

FIG. 11 (cont'd)

FIG. 11 (cont'd)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Keeping in mind Strasenburgh Planetarium Director McLennan's stipulation for dignity to be used throughout the design of the corporate image, its incorporation into the television announcement, and the treatment of the advertising mailer, it is felt that this requirement has been adequately accounted for in the execution of these various tasks, especially in view of the fact that the proper and decorous character of the planetarium as an educational and cultural center has been maintained consistently.

In the television announcement, particularly, the prevalent mood is one of the grandeur and mystery of the universe. The resultant message has an air of gravity, solemnity, and soberness about it that is considered essential to the nature of the planetarium and the realm in which it deals.

The emotional approach, carried forward so strongly by Whitman's poetry, has been enhanced further by the tendancy for involvement on the part of the viewers. The message is so understated and subtle, without the help of brass bands or incessent patter, that an involvement on the audience's part is absolutely necessary in order for them to fill in their own personal feelings and emotions when subjected to the visuals and sound track. The name Strasenburgh Planetarium, for example, is not spoken at all by the narrator, but

instead is simply shown on the screen during the last few seconds of the announcement, while the narrator intones:

> To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying clouds, as one with them.

Thus, the audience must supply the unvoiced but intended message for itself, that is: to come to the planetarium programs and to merge one's spirit and become one with the forces of the universe. This is the most effective means of communication for a "cool" medium like television, a medium that elicits a large amount of audience involvement.

Indeed, it is mandatory that the public become involved with space and the events that will occur there, for they are sure to ultimately affect our daily lives in the most intimate of ways. The knowledge thus gleaned will most assuredly change our concepts of the universe, of life, and perhaps even change our moral and ethical disciplines. This short television announcement for Strasenburgh Planetarium is an attempt to motivate the spectator to think for himself and to urge him to turn his thoughts and reflections towards this vital subject. This, at least, can be the beginning.

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